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ABSTRACT

This paper presents results from a 1992 survey of library media specialists in southeastern Kentucky, focusing on technological resources available in library media centers and the media specialists' perceptions of their roles and the future as affected by the Kentucky Educational Reform Act. Results indicated that the four most widely available newer technologies are televisions, video cassette recorders, computers, and camcorders. Few library media specialists are aware of the newer technologies and their roles in the media center, and few library media specialists view the library as a technologically rich information and production area for teachers and students. (SLD)

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Restructuring Library Media Centers in Kentucky

As a result of the Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA) of 1990, schools in Kentucky are restructuring through site based management, non-graded primary schools, performance-based student assessment, and instructional uses of technology in order to change the way children are educated within the Commonwealth. Within KERA, technology is viewed as playing an important role in enlarging and enriching the learning experiences of students. Thus, the need has arisen to develop a long range plan for the efficient and equitable use of technology at all levels. In order to facilitate the integration of technology in education, KERA created a state advisory council for educational technology whose purpose it is to design and implement a plan to cover all aspects of educational technology.

The initiation of the Kentucky mandate has forced each school to quickly prepare a five-year technology plan. For many, technology is a new area; one that because of a lack of funds for many years, has been largely neglected in terms of purchases as well as serious utilization studies by individual schools and their library media specialists. Therefore, such a sweeping reform as KERA presents an opportunity to examine not only the implementation of new technological devices but also to track any potential changes in the role of the library media specialists. Preliminary to a long-range examination, a description of the schools' current technological sophistication and the roles of school personnel becomes important. Specifically, determinations are required of the technologies and technology expertise currently within the schools, and the role of the library media specialists in the initial planning and implementation stages.

This paper presents the results obtained in a 1992 survey of library media specialists in southeastern Kentucky. In particular, the paper focus on: a) technological resources currently available in library media centers; and b) the library's media specialists' perception of their role and in the future as a result of the changes brought about by the Kentucky Educational Reform Act.

Survey Results

The results of the survey indicated that the four most widely available, newer technologies are: a) televisions (98%), b) video cassette recorders (97%), c) computers (71%), and d) camcorders (58%). In addition, collections of videotapes and software programs are being housed in library media centers.

The equipment and accompanying instructional materials are most often checked out of the library and utilized by the teachers in the classroom to present information to students. Four technologies existing in less than a third of the library media centers are: a) CD-ROM's (24%), b) automated library systems (16%), c) facsimile machines (11%), and d) videodisc players (2%).

As a result of KERA, schools are beginning to develop their five year technology plans. The five most frequently mentioned technologies desired are: a) computers (44%), b) CD-ROM's (36%), c) networking of computers (35%), d) automated library systems (33%), and e) camcorders (32%).

A relevant finding of the study was that televisions and videocassette recorders were seldom requested in the five year plan. This phenomena can be explained by the fact that the state of Kentucky has had a strong educational television network for several years and, for a period of time, offered matching funds for the purchase of these items.

Two other findings of note were: a) multimedia stations were not reported to exist in any library media centers, and were included in only 13.6% of the technologies plans; and b) only 16% of the library media centers stated that they have automated library systems. However, only 33% included automated library systems in their five-year technology plans.

Perceived Role of the Library Media Specialist

Within the survey, only 42% of the library media specialists felt that the Kentucky Educational Reform Act (KERA) along with the Kentucky Educational Technology System (KETS) will have an impact on their roles as library media specialists. Sixty percent of the schools reported having a technology committee. Of the schools having a technology committee, the survey indicated that 60% of the library media specialists were involved in some capacity with the technology committee. Only, 12% of those involved served as the chair.

Two findings were significant. Only, two-thirds of the library media specialists felt that technology will affect their collection development. In the teaching of search strategies, 28% of the respondents stated they will teach only the automated catalog. In contrast, sixty-two percent stated that they will teach both the traditional card catalog and automated catalog search strategies.

The results of further in depth interviews with library media specialists suggested that they feel dramatically unprepared to use technology themselves or to help the classroom teacher integrate the technology

into the curriculum. Apparently, the library media specialists are overwhelmed with the variety of technologies available and appear to be confused in determining the direction needed for the library media centers. Several library media specialists indicated that they prefer to remain in the traditional role of the librarian where they only care for the books and students who come to the library. Finally, the emerging role of the library media specialists as an information broker is retrieved from a student workstation not necessarily in the library media center.

Summary

This survey provides a first step in tracking the technological changes as a result of KERA and KETS. The results of the survey indicated that few library media specialists are aware of the newer technologies and their role in the library media centers. Furthermore, library media specialists continue to view the library as a storage and lending area of books rather than a technologically rich information or production area for teachers and students.